



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

NORTH RIM CONCESSIONER RV PARK UPGRADE AND NEW DORMITORY GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Grand Canyon National Park proposes to upgrade and expand the existing concessioner recreational vehicle (RV) park and construct a new 44-unit dormitory on the North Rim in the area set aside for concessioner housing and the Employee Dining Room (EDR). The proposal to undertake the Action Alternative will provide critically needed housing for Park employees on the North Rim.

This Environmental Assessment evaluates two Alternatives for addressing the purpose and need for action, including a No Action Alternative and an Action Alternative. The Action Alternative includes removal of 6 Ponderosa Pine trees, 5 dead aspen trees and additional disturbance of approximately 3-4 acres of land previously disturbed by vehicular and foot traffic. No threatened or endangered species of plants or animals or their habitat would be affected.

The Action Alternative would not have measurable impacts to cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, air quality, soundscape, floodplains and wetlands, environmental justice, prime and unique farmland, socioeconomic environment, or visitor experience. The Action Alternative would result in negligible to minor adverse impacts to soils and water, negligible to moderate adverse impact to vegetation and moderate long-term beneficial impacts to Park/concessioner operations.

In June 2003 the National Park Service (NPS) prepared an *Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (EA/AEF)* to Upgrade Concessioner RV park and Construct New Dormitory. This EA/AEF, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, analyzed the impacts resulting from upgrading the existing recreational vehicle park and construction of a new 44 room dormitory immediately adjacent to it in the designated concessioners housing area within the North Rim developed area.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

This proposal will provide critically needed housing, in accordance with the GMP, to employees on the North Rim. Many employees are currently residing in guest accommodations or grossly substandard employee housing. Visitors and employees will benefit from the preferred alternative.

RV Park

Construction proposed in this Alternative would be primarily confined to the footprint of the existing RV park and approximately 2 acres immediately adjacent to it. No trees will be removed.

This Alternative consists of:

- Upgrading and rehabilitation of 6 RV parking pads within the existing footprint of the RV park.

- Construction of 4 new RV parking pads within the existing footprint of the RV park.
- Construction of 7 new RV parking pads in a relatively disturbed area immediately adjacent (south) to the RV park.

General Construction Schedule:

Construction would take approximately 4 months, starting on or about October 1, 2003; however, weather conditions or other unexpected events could delay construction.

44-Unit Dormitory

Construction proposed in this Alternative would require further disturbance to approximately 2 acres in the concessioner housing area. Several dormitories already exist in this area in addition to the Employee Dining Room.

This Alternative consists of:

- Removal of 6 ponderosa pine trees and 5 dead aspen trees
- Site grading and leveling
- Construction of 8,000 square foot dormitory building
- Construction of 22 regular and 2 handicapped parking spaces
- Follow-up landscaping and revegetation

General Construction Schedule:

Construction would take approximately 8 months, starting on or about October 1, 2003; however, weather conditions or other unexpected events could delay construction.

MITIGATING MEASURES

The following mitigation has been selected to minimize, reduce or eliminate impacts of the proposed action:

Contractor Orientation

Contractors working in the Park are given orientation concerning proper conduct of operations. This orientation is provided in both written form and verbally at a preconstruction meeting. This policy will continue on proposed projects. Orientation topics will include:

- Wildlife should not be approached or fed.
- Collecting any Park resources, including plants, animals, and historic or prehistoric materials, is prohibited.
- Contractor must have a safety policy in place and follow it.
- A vehicle fuel leakage and spill plan will be developed and implemented for this project.
- Other environmental concerns and requirements discussed elsewhere in this EA would be addressed, including relevant mitigation measures listed below.

Limitation of Area Affected

The following mitigation measures will be implemented to minimize the area affected by construction activities.

- The staging area for the construction office (a trailer), construction equipment, and material storage will be located in previously disturbed areas near the project site.

- Construction zones will be fenced with construction tape, snow fencing, or some similar material before any construction activity commences. The fencing will define the construction zone and confine activity to the minimum area required for construction. All protection measures will be clearly stated in the construction specifications, and workers will be instructed to avoid conducting activities beyond the construction zone as defined by the construction zone fencing.

Soil Erosion

To minimize soil erosion, the following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the Action Alternative.

- Standard erosion control measures such as silt fences, sand bags, or equivalent control methods will be used to minimize any potential soil erosion.
- If soils from outside the Park are required, soils will be cleared for archaeological resources, animal pests, and exotic species and noxious weeds prior to being hauled into the Park.
- Any revegetation efforts will use site-adapted native species and/or native seed, and Park policies regarding revegetation and site restoration will be incorporated into the plan.
- The plan will consider, among other things, the use of native species, plant salvage potential, exotic vegetation and noxious weeds, and pedestrian barriers. Policy related to revegetation will be referenced in NPS Management Policies (NPS 2001b; Chapter 9).

Exotic Vegetation and Noxious Weeds

To prevent the introduction and minimize the spread of exotic vegetation and noxious weeds, the following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the Action Alternative.

- All construction equipment that would leave the road (e.g., bulldozers and backhoes) will be pressure washed prior to entering the Park.
- The location of the staging area for construction equipment will be Park-approved and treated for exotic vegetation.
- Parking of vehicles will be limited to existing roads or the staging area.
- Any fill, rock, or additional topsoil required will be obtained from a Park-approved source.
- All areas disturbed by construction will be revegetated using site-adapted native seed and/or plants.

Water Quality

To minimize potential impacts to water quality, the following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the Action Alternative.

- A storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) will be developed by the contractor and approved by the Park prior to any ground-disturbing activities. All National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements will be met.
- Standard erosion control measures such as silt fences, sand bags, or equivalent control methods will be used to minimize any potential sediment delivery to streams.

Special Status Species

To protect any unknown or undiscovered threatened, endangered, or special status species, the construction contract will include provisions for the discovery of such. These provisions will require the cessation of construction activities until Park staff evaluate the project impact on the discovery and will allow modification of the contract for any protection measures determined necessary to protect the discovery. Mitigation measures for known special status species are as follows:

California Condor

- Prior to the start of a construction project, the Park will contact personnel monitoring California condor locations and movement within the Park to determine the locations and status of condors in or near the project area.
- If a condor appears at the construction site, construction will cease until it leaves on its own or until permitted personnel employ techniques that result in the individual condor leaving the area.
- Construction workers and supervisors will be instructed to avoid interaction with condors and to contact the appropriate Park or Peregrine Fund personnel immediately if and when condor(s) appear at a construction site.
- The construction site will be cleaned up throughout and at the end of each day that work is being conducted (i.e., trash disposed of, scrap materials picked up) to minimize the likelihood of condors visiting the site. Park condor staff will complete a site visit to the area to ensure adequate clean-up measures are taken.
- To prevent water contamination and potential poisoning of condors, a vehicle fluid-leakage and spill plan will be developed and implemented for this project. This plan will be reviewed by the Park biologist for adequacy in addressing condors.
- If non-nesting condors appear within 1 mile of the project area, blasting will be postponed until condors leave or are hazed by permitted personnel.
- If condor nesting activity is known within 1 mile of the project area, then blasting activity will be restricted during the active nesting season, if viable nests persist. The active nesting season is February 1 to October 15, or until young are fully fledged. These dates may be modified based on the most current information, in consultation with the Park biologist and the USFWS.
- If condor nesting activity is known within 0.5 mile of the project area, then light and heavy construction in the project area will be restricted during the active nesting season, if viable nests persist. The active nesting season is February 1 to October 15, or until young are fully fledged. These dates may be modified based on the most current information, in consultation with the Park biologist and the USFWS.

Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO)

- If a construction project occurs within a Protected Activity Center (PAC) with no known nest site, then all construction activity will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28). However, if the project in a PAC is at least 0.8 km (0.5 mile) from known nest sites and the project does not include blasting, then the project can be implemented during the breeding season. The breeding season is March 1 – August 31.
- If a construction project outside of PACs occurs within 1.6 km (1 mile) of a known PAC nest or roost site, the boundary of a PAC where the nest or roost site is not known, or unsurveyed restricted, protected, or predicted MSO habitat, then all blasting in that project area will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28).
- If a construction project outside of PACs occurs within 0.8 km (0.5 mile) of a known PAC nest or roost site, the boundary of a PAC where the nest or roost site is not known, or unsurveyed restricted, protected, or predicted MSO habitat, then light and heavy construction activity in that project area will be restricted to the non-breeding season (September 1 – February 28).

Cultural Resources

To minimize the impacts of construction activities on cultural resources, the following mitigation measures will be incorporated into the Action Alternative.

- If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during the course of the project, a Park archeologist will be contacted immediately. All work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery

would be halted until the resources could be identified and documented and an appropriate mitigation strategy developed, if necessary, in accordance with the stipulations of the 1995 Programmatic Agreement among the National Park Service, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regarding the General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona.

- All workers would be informed of the penalties of illegally collecting artifacts or intentionally damaging any archeological or historic property. Workers would also be informed of the correct procedures if previously unknown resources were uncovered during construction activities.

Visual Resources

To minimize visual impacts, mitigation measures will include the following:

- Clearing of trees and understory will be feathered to blend with natural openings in the forest canopy.
- Natural, muted colors will be used to blend any manmade surfaces into the landscape.
- All contractors will use site of proposed new dormitory for primary staging to minimize ground disturbance and to decrease the amount of construction equipment visible to visitors.

Visitor Experience

The following mitigation measure will be incorporated into the Action Alternative to minimize the impacts of construction activities on the visitor experience:

- Unless otherwise approved by the Park, operation of heavy construction equipment will be restricted to 8:00 am to 6:00 p.m. in the summer (May 1- September 30) and to 9:00 am to 5:00 p.m. during the rest of the year.

Park Operations

The following mitigation measure will be incorporated into the Action Alternative to minimize the impacts of construction activities on Park operations:

- The concessioner will provide a contract inspector so Park staff will not need to monitor day to day contract compliance for this project.

Air Quality

Air quality impacts of the Action Alternative is expected to be temporary and localized. To minimize these impacts, the following actions will be taken:

- To reduce entrainment of fine particles from hauling material, sufficient freeboard will be maintained and loose material loads (aggregate, soils, etc.) will be tarped.
- To reduce tailpipe emissions, construction equipment will not be left idling any longer than is necessary for safety and mechanical reasons.
- To reduce construction dust in the short term, water will be applied to problem areas. Equipment will be limited to the fenced project area to minimize soil disturbance and consequent dust generation.
- Landscaping and revegetation will control long-term soil dust production. Mulch and the plants themselves will stabilize the soil and reduce wind speed/shear against the ground surface.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The environmental assessment evaluated two alternatives: the preferred, described above as the proposal, and a no-action alternative in which existing conditions and management of the areas would continue. The no-

action alternative was determined to not meet the objectives of the project and was not in the best interest of the visiting public or providing needed housing for employees.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) provides direction that “[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s Section 101. The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which guides the CEQ:

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. assure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
4. preserve important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
5. achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities; and
6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Alternative A would not result in any new disturbance of natural resources (Criterion 1 partially met) but would allow an increasingly greater problem of lessened visitor services and safety and fail to provide critically needed employee housing in a remote area of the park (Criteria 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 not met).

Alternative B will result in disturbance to less than 3-4 acres in a secluded developed housing area, but will substantially reduce the use of historic accommodations by park employees. Those accommodations will then be restored to historic uses (lodging) by visitors to the park. Alternative B allows accomplishment of the GMP stated goal of increasing employee housing on the North Rim. It will also improve visitor and employee safety (Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 met).

Through the process of internal scoping, scoping with the public and other agencies, the environmentally preferred alternative was determined to be Alternative B. Alternative B would best meet the purpose and need for action while addressing the NEPA criteria stated above, overall Park Service objectives and other evaluation factors. No new information came forward from public scoping or consultation with other agencies to necessitate the development of any new alternatives, other than those described and evaluated in this document. The action alternative addresses the purpose and need for action and will fully achieve all identified project objectives.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. As discussed fully in the EA, the preferred alternative will not affect geology; prime and unique farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; air quality; water quality; cultural resources, minorities or low-income populations or communities; or socioeconomics. The preferred alternative will have negligible to minor, site-specific, short-term impacts through compaction

and displacement of 3-4 acres of soil; moderate, site-specific, long term disturbance to biotic community including the loss of 6 live pine trees; minor exotic species introduction potential, which can be reduced with mitigation measures; negligible to minor short-term impacts to general wildlife populations; negligible to minor short and long term adverse impacts to special status species; and minor to moderate long-term beneficial impacts to park operations through decreased maintenance requirements and increased housing for employees.

It may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the federally listed California condor, Mexican Spotted owl.

After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's criteria for adverse effects (36 CFR 800.5, Assessment of Adverse Effects), implementation of the preferred alternative will not affect historic resources and a "no historic properties affected" determination has been made.

Degree of effect on public health or safety. The preferred alternative will have a minor, long-term benefit on public safety because it allows for more park staff to assist the park visitor.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. As described in the environmental assessment, historic resources, prime farmlands, and wetlands will not be affected. No ecologically critical areas such as wild and scenic rivers will be affected by the preferred alternative. The project sites are not in proposed wilderness.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. There were no highly controversial effects identified during either preparation of the environmental assessment or the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified in the environmental assessment or the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. The preferred alternative neither establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effect nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Impacts of the preferred alternative identified in the environmental assessment were to soils and water, biotic communities, general wildlife populations, special status species, and park operations. As described in the environmental assessment, a variety of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions have or may affect resources in the North Rim developed area. However, the adverse impacts of the preferred alternative will be a negligible component of the overall minor cumulative impacts, due to the limited scope of the preferred alternative.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The project areas were surveyed for archeological resources by park staff. No sites were found in the project areas.

After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's criteria for adverse effects (36 CFR 800.5, Assessment of Adverse Effects), implementation of the preferred alternative will not affect historic resources and a "no historic properties affected" determination has been made.

If previously unknown archeological resources are discovered during construction, all work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will be halted until the resources are identified and documented. An appropriate mitigation strategy, if necessary, will be developed in consultation with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office and concerned tribal officials.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat. The preferred alternative may affect but is not likely to adversely affect Mexican spotted owls or California condors. The incorporation of mitigation measures will minimize the impacts of ecosystem change to habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Field Office, was sent a 'batch' Biological Assessment according to Section 7 (ESA) consultation procedures and concurred with the NPS determinations.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local environmental protection law. The preferred alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES

In addition to determining the environmental consequences of the preferred and other alternatives, National Park Service policy (*Management Policies*, 2001) requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether or not actions would impair park resources. The prohibited impairment is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible National Park Service manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values. A major impact to any park resource or value may constitute an impairment.

It has been determined that there will be no impairment of the Grand Canyon National Park's resource or values as a result of this project because there will be no major adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is:

1. necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of Grand Canyon National Park;
2. key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or
3. identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant National Park Service planning documents.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A notification and short article on North Rim project proposals was published in the Williams/Grand Canyon newspaper, in the January 3-9, 2001 edition. Official public scoping was initiated on July 17, 2001 for a 30-day period. Affected agencies, affiliated tribes and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) were also sent a scoping letter. The North Rim projects public scoping was a topic of discussion at several of the monthly GRCA community meetings held at the Park between January and July 2001. A public scoping letter discussing the project was sent to a mailing list of approximately 325 people in July 2001. The purpose of the scoping letter was to describe the proposed action to any interested or affected

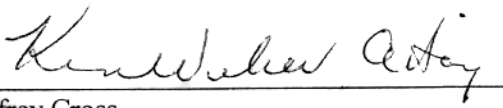
parties and solicit comments from those who may have concerns with the proposed action. Six responses to this scoping effort were received. All were in favor of the projects.

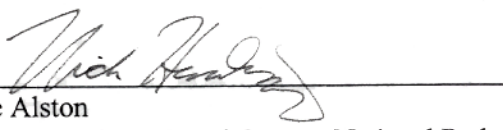
The Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect was sent to those members of the public who indicated a desire to review the document during scoping, all affected agencies and tribes, and made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period ending July 25, 2003. No comments were received.


CONCLUSION

The preferred alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Negative environmental impacts that could occur are negligible to moderate in effect. There are no unmitigated adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, known ethnographic resources, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that the project does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and an EIS will not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:  7/17/03
Jeffrey Cross Date
Science Center Director, Grand Canyon National Park

Recommended:  7/17/03
Joe Alston Date
Superintendent, Grand Canyon National Park

Approved:  7/18/03
Karen P. Wade Date
Intermountain Regional Director